

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

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SECDEF WASHDC

INFO CINCPAC

JCS

DEPCHIEF JUSMAGTHAI UDORN

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 0713

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, US, LA

SUBJECT: FY 1977-81 SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

REFS: A) STATE 18629

B) CINCPAC 142021Z DEC 74

1. GUIDANCE CONTAINED IN REF A AND RECOMMENDATION MADE BY CINCPAC (REF B) CONCERNING FY 77-81 LAOS SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ARE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME. HOWEVER, MISSION PREFERS CINCPAC-RECOMMENDED ACTION CONCERNING PROJECTED FORCE LEVELS FROM POM GUIDANCE AND QUESTIONS BASIS FOR PARA TWO OF DEPARTMENT'S PROGRAM GUIDELINES (REF A).

2. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO ASSUME THAT THE LAO FORCES WILL BE REDUCED FROM THE PROJECTED END-FY 75 STRENGTH OF 50,000 TO 30,000 BY THE END OF FY 76 AND REMAIN AT THIS LEVEL THROUGH FY 81. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CINCPAC FORMULATION--I.E., THAT THE FORCES WILL BE REDUCED "AS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS PERMIT"--REFLECTS REALITIES IN LAOS MORE ACCURATELY.

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3. THE MISSION'S UPDATE OF THE FY 77-81 POM, WHICH HAS

BEEN PROVISIONALLY APPROVED BY THE CINCPAC IN-COUNTRY REVIEW TEAM, RECOMMENDS A FORCE STRUCTURE FOR THE FIVE-YEAR PERIOD OF 46,000. IN OUR JUDGMENT, THIS IS A REALISTIC ASSESSMENT FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. WE CANNOT FORECAST THE EVOLUTION OF THE PGNU NOR WHEN, IF EVER, THE LPF FORCES WILL BE INTEGRATED INTO THE RLGA. THE DRASTIC REVISION OF THE APPROVED FY 76-80 POM CALLED FOR BY REF A IS TOO RIGID, LOCKS US INTO A PROGRAM WHICH MIGHT FORCE A PREMATURE REDUCTION IN FAR STRENGTH, AND REOPENS AN ISSUE WHICH WE BELIEVE WAS SETTLED IN MARCH 74 BY CINCPAC CONCURRENCE WITH OUR FORCE LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS.

4. MISSION POSITION HAS ALWAYS BEEN THAT IN THE LONG RUN A 30,000-MAN FORCE WOULD BE ADEQUATE TO MEET THE COUNTRY'S NEEDS PROVIDED THAT THERE WAS A STABLE CEASEFIRE; THAT A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION WAS FORMED; AND THAT THERE WAS NO OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE IN LAOS SITUATION. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT THESE CONDITIONS HAVE NOT BEEN MET.

A) THE CEASEFIRE IS ALMOST TWO YEARS OLD AND OPEN HOSTILITIES HAVE CEASED. NONETHELESS, RECENT INCIDENTS AT BAN HOUET SAI AND IN MR III SHOW THAT THE PL WILL NOT HESITATE TO USE MILITARY PRESSURE TO FURTHER THEIR AIMS.

B) ALTHOUGH THE PGNU WAS FORMED IN APRIL 1974, SUFFICIENT PROGRESS HAS NOT BEEN MADE TO ESTABLISH A UNITED GOVERNMENT IN EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. IN FACT, LPF HAS ASSISTED, IF NOT INSPIRED, STRIKES, PROTESTS AND STUDENT UNREST WHICH HAVE KEPT THE POLITICAL POT BOILING. FURTHERMORE, LPF HAS RIGIDLY MAINTAINED CONTROL OVER ITS OWN ZONE.

C) DEMOBILIZATION TO 50,000 HAS YET TO BE OBSERVED AND ITS FULL IMPACT IS YET TO BE FELT.

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D) NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES REMAIN IN EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER EASTERN PANHANDLE.

5. THE VIENTIANE SIDE WILL BE HARD-PRESSED TO DEAL WITH THESE PROBLEMS, AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE COULD MANAGE A FURTHER REDUCTION FROM 50,000 TO 30,000 IN ONE YEAR. THIS WOULD REPRESENT A REDUCTION OF TWO-THIRDS OF THE LAO FORCES IN THE SPACE OF TWO YEARS. IF THE LAO IN THEIR

OWN WAY AND AT THEIR OWN PACE ARE ABLE TO PULL TOGETHER
AND MAKE THE PGNU AND LATER GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION
WORK, THEN ANOTHER REDUCTION IN FORCE LEVEL WILL BECOME
REALISTIC AND FEASIBLE.
WHITEHOUSE

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